



Crossley, M., & Arthur, L. (2017). Wide Horizons and Blurred Boundaries: Comparative Perspectives on Adult and lifelong Learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 36(1-2), 181-194.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2017.1268833>

Peer reviewed version

Link to published version (if available):
[10.1080/02601370.2017.1268833](https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2017.1268833)

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Wide horizons and blurred boundaries: comparative perspectives on adult and lifelong learning

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The history of comparative education is a distinguished one, although, like most specialist fields in education, the influence of different intellectual paradigms can be seen in the variety of approaches to research, and in the diverse nature of the leading books and journals. It is an area that Peter Jarvis has engaged with and contributed to over many years. Furthermore, many of his publications, authored or edited, address international issues in adult education which provoke comparative reflection. Readers are encouraged to step out of their own world view

and environment into less familiar territory or into, what Bhaba (1994) calls, the ‘Third Space’. In times of rapidly intensifying globalisation, both in the physical and abstract sense, on the one hand, and the increasing polarisation of ideas and communities on the other, comparative research in education has much to offer. If educational change is to be better understood, or successfully embraced, contexts and specificities matter more than many policy makers and researchers realise. This calls for deeper analyses of the tensions between the global and the local which lie at the heart of context sensitive forms of comparative and international research in education (Crossley and Jarvis, 2001). Here we examine Peter Jarvis’s contribution to both his primary field of adult education and to the challenging and thought-provoking area of comparative scholarship.

Introduction

Adult teaching and learning has been at the heart of almost all of Peter Jarvis’s activities for close to fifty years – a period in time when the increasing demands of the global market economy have changed adult education beyond all recognition. Peter’s specific contributions to the comparative field is, we argue, that he has been an early and persistent voice locating adult education within the broader field of comparative education - long before the global concept of lifelong learning broke down seemingly distinct barriers between many fields of

educational scholarship. Paradoxically perhaps, increased networking and instant communication, by-products of such processes, have ensured a shared understanding among scholars, researchers and practitioners of the values and commitments which have characterised the field across cultural borders. Such changes are reflected in many of Peter's publications, particularly in the international, comparative field.

The aims of this paper are, therefore, to first look at a selection of his work that articulates his thoughts on milestones in the history of comparative adult education and the way these have accommodated different perspectives in the course of his professional life. We then discuss his contributions to the broader field of comparative education that focus on lifelong learning, globalisation and the learning society. The final section examines the contemporary context of comparative education and what contributions lifelong learning can make in the light of the many challenges that this resurgent, multidisciplinary field faces. We hope this helps readers to appreciate the values and creativity that arise from Peter's extensive body of work.

Peter Jarvis: an international scholar

Peter's multifarious and exemplary contributions to the area of adult education/lifelong learning are, as readers of this volume will know, well documented not only in the UK but in many other countries across the globe. The list of his substantial number of books and numerous journal articles authored, edited or co-edited, many translated into other languages and published in a wide range of countries, is impressive. In addition, he was, until recently, teaching, lecturing, giving key note speeches, and collaborating with colleagues in many different countries and continents. It seems noteworthy to us that from early on in his academic career, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s, and most certainly ever since, Peter sought to reach out to international communities, to engage with scholars and students across the globe who shared an interest adult learning, and most importantly, to keep in touch with many of them over the years. His collaborators come from a range of intellectual traditions, nationalities and cultures. They share a commitment to developing scholarship and research in what is an area with important implications for social, economic and political development (Holford et.al, 1998). A number of Peter's books and chapter titles carry the word 'International' thus reflecting his love for, and appreciation of, the big wide world. "This is useful," he argues "because it enables us to compare what is happening in our own society with what is occurring elsewhere" (Jarvis, 1999:iii).

Peter's international scholarship flourished within the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Surrey. This he joined in 1976, "Just before", as he says, "the modern global capitalist market was born" (Jarvis, 2014, p. 45). It was a time when the provision of adult education had increased rapidly. This, in turn, had led to the demand for the professionalization of its tutors and hence an expansion in university postgraduate courses concerned with the theory and practice of adult education (Kelly, 1992; Fieldhouse et.al, 1996). At that time adult education was perceived as the 'Cinderella' of mainstream education - but the plus side of this was that it left many scholars and practitioners free to pursue its more radical, normative values for the sake of emancipation and social change. Texts by international scholars and thinkers such Malcolm Knowles, Paolo Freire, Ettore Gelpi, and Roby Kidd, among numerous others, became essential reading in adult education circles (see Jarvis, 1987). Many of those scholars became Peter's personal friends and academic collaborators.

As co-founder of the *International Journal in Lifelong Education* in 1982, Peter and his editorial team ensured, and continue to do so, that, as its title promises, international adult education studies from many corners of the world are represented. From its early days the journal has been a significant 'propeller' for Peter's international outlook and intercultural understanding. In practice this meant: giving papers at many conferences, collaborating with a wide range scholars and researchers, seeking new contacts and exchanging ideas and encouraging academics to submit papers to the expanding journal. In this way he was able to establish a considerable international network of colleagues with an explicit interest in adult learning and teaching. These activities also fostered Peter's interest in international comparative education. It was, therefore, appropriate that Peter was invited to become a member of the Editorial Board of *Comparative Education* in 1991, by then a leading international journal. For well over thirty years, Peter, though not a comparative researcher in the narrow sense, sought to ensure that the adult education/lifelong learning dimension was appropriately covered in the journal's academic domain. His impact is widely visible in his co-editing of two Millennium Special Issues on the state of the art of comparative education which came to be the most widely read, stand-alone issues of the journal during that period of time (Crossley, M., Jarvis P. 2000, and 2001). The co-edited Special Issue on The Study the East and the West in Comparative Education (SoonHee Han, Jarvis, P., 2013) is also noteworthy since it illustrates the global reach and cross-cultural collaboration in which Peter

was engaged. Such activities gave him a broad understanding of the complex and changing nature of international and comparative research in education. At the same time, those involved in the field benefitted from the breadth and depth of his knowledge and understanding of adult learning theories and related disciplines.

Work for the journal *Comparative Education* also underpinned Peter's election as President of the British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE) from 1999-2000. This led to him taking an interest in, and guiding, the professional association and its journal *Compare*, as well as delivering the Presidential Address at its annual conference held in Birmingham in the year 2000. The title of this address was 'Globalisation, citizenship and the education of adults in contemporary European Society'. In this it is argued that market forces and neo-liberalist policies meant that adult education was becoming institutionalised and thereby could lose its more radical function. Adult education, Peter pleaded, could and should maintain its role in promoting citizenship and democracy. We live in an unequal world, he argued with passion, addressing an audience of comparative scholars and researchers who, in the main, knew little about the 'Cinderella' field of adult education. (Jarvis, 2002). It was after all, a neglected field of little political and scholarly interest for many – despite the lifelong learning rhetoric which began to emerge in the 1990s on a global level.

Perspectives on comparative (adult) education

Peter's international activities inevitably drew him to engage in comparative adult education. Indeed, theorising about the nature of comparisons and their analysis occupied his thinking over a number of years (1991, 1994a, 1994b, 1996). The advent of the 1992 Single European Market had led to sudden demand for international publications, particularly around vocational education and the development of transferable skills, resulting in a number of Europe-wide adult education research projects. For a brief period only it seemed as if adult education and Europe were suddenly 'in'. International studies, in Peter's view then, were the precursor of comparative ones - though few were truly comparative in nature, he argued (Jarvis, 1994b). This leads to the following questions: what is meant by comparative adult education and how does it, if at all, differ from mainstream comparative education? In his *International Dictionary of Adult and Continuing Education* (1999) Peter offered the following differentiation:

Comparative adult education is less well advanced than comparative initial education because adult education rarely constitutes a single system in a country. It should be noted that it is neither necessarily international nor even between countries (Jarvis, 1999, p.31)

Comparative education is the study of educational systems, comparing factors that lead to the development of different systems, both within a country or between countries. It is an empirical study (ibid.)

Such statements may be seen as somewhat contentious in the context of the 21st century where other definitions contend for attention, and when the worldwide globalisation and lifelong learning agendas have led to an inevitable blurring of boundaries. Those involved in mainstream comparative education as well as those in comparative adult education, would challenge this narrow definition of ‘comparative’, arguing that its scope is much more open-ended, embracing a wide range of ideas, approaches and constituencies.

In many respects, the history of comparative adult education mirrors the history of adult education itself. During the 1960s, both areas experienced a flourishing of scholarly ideas and enthusiasm in university adult education departments in many Western countries. Academia in education was not yet unsettled by the uncertainties of postmodernism, critical theory and neoliberalism, that is, not until the oil crisis of 1973 which triggered massive unemployment in the UK and with it the beginnings of government intervention in adult education. In the course of the next forty years or so changing terminologies, like shifting sands, mirror such developments: ranging from, among others, adult education, recurrent education, community education, continuing education, post compulsory education to the more individualised and marketable terminology of lifelong learning. All are cloaked in the different philosophical and political mantles prevalent in their place, time span and specific contexts. Peter, in the course of his professional life, addressed all of these in his numerous publications.

Equally complex was the nature of the changing relationship between comparative education and comparative adult education. Titmus (1989) regarded adult comparative studies as having evolved independently, not as a subsection of, but as a supplement to, comparative education, although he acknowledged that both had broadly similar aims – a point of view more recently also accepted by Field et.al (2016). Nevertheless, the historical influence that comparative education had in shaping the aims and research strategies of comparative adult education

cannot be denied. It is Jullien de Paris (1775-1848) who is widely seen as the father of comparative education, with his first attempt to develop a science of comparative education. In Jullien's view education was capable of being transported from one country to another (Jullien 1817). Jullien, it should be remembered, operated within the logic of the Enlightenment prevalent at the time (Beech, 2006). In contrast, Crossley and Jarvis (2000) point out that it was Sadler (1900) with his much quoted address at the Guilford Educational Conference in 1900 who raised the question: "How far can we learn anything of practical value from the study of foreign systems of education?" This questioned the simplistic international transfer of educational policy and practice, laid the foundation of the socio-cultural, interpretive dimension of the field, and represented a paradigm shift which challenged researchers, reformers and practitioners for the decades to come.

The field of comparative education began to really blossom after the Second World War. The 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of new thinking around structural functionalism and methodological empiricism. In the United States and elsewhere the first professional associations of comparative education scholars left their mark during the 1950s and 60s which resulted in the foundation of the World Council of Comparative Societies (WCCES) in 1970. Concurrently, the study of the field continued to expand within major universities in Europe, the United States and Canada. In Britain it was the University of London which established the first postgraduate programmes for comparative education. Others were soon to follow as detailed by Crossley and Watson (2003, 2009).

The history of comparative adult education can be traced back, albeit much more loosely, to the late 19th and early 20th century when easier travel and information exchange led to greater cross-cultural transference of thoughts, ideas and practical solutions between countries (Künzel, 1994). Following the First World War the ethos of adult education provided an ideal forum for the spirit of internationalism. As early as 1918 Albert Mansbridge, the founder of the Workers' Education Association (WEA) set up the World Association for Adult Education with the aim to foster international understanding and solidarity. Thereafter, the wish to explore other national systems and to broaden one's mind by observing foreign practices in order to implant what was valuable and worthwhile at home in the spirit of peace, mutuality and tolerance, permeated much of adult education during the years before and after the 2nd World War. Undoubtedly, in the years following the Second World War comparative adult education required an ideology and a philosophy in its own right.

The first systematic attempt, however, to explore adult education in a comparative framework began in earnest with the 1966 Exeter Conference, New Hampshire (USA). The conference had as its aim the study of adult education systems in five countries and to refine comparative research methods which were based on the collection and analysis of vast amount of data to reveal similarities and differences. With the hindsight of several years, Harris (1980, p. 13) was somewhat dismissive about the exercise. “The total impact of all these tables, is, one must admit, likely to stun any but the most highly committed students”. Yet the conference sought to establish comparative adult education in its own right, that is, independent of similar developments elsewhere (Liveright, Haygood 1968). While such ambitious undertakings did, in the end, only partially succeed, they, nevertheless, served to stimulate an interest in what was then perceived as an emergent field of study (Harris, 1980). In the main, however, it was claimed that adult education could not easily be compared. The prevailing argument was that school level education as a fixed social system with similar structures and institutions in most countries could lend itself to cross-cultural comparative analysis while the provision of adult education was thought to be too diverse, too fragmented and too tied to local contexts. Thus Bereday’s four stage model for research in comparative education, which consisted of description, interpretation, juxtaposition and comparison, would not be appropriate in the area of adult education (Titmus, 1989). Yet Bereday’s (1964) seminal book *Comparative Method in Education* was, at the time, considered to be the “most important book in comparative education” (King, 1964, p.37). It may be, that while the pictorial image of Bereday’s typology was easily understood, and remembered, few were prepared to follow his detailed instructions. For adult educators with an interest in explicit comparisons the task remained a difficult one. Furthermore, in the view of Kidd (1975) such research ignored the place of normative values with their emphasis on learning from cross-cultural studies. Learning, after all, was, and still is, at the heart of adult education. But perhaps, as Künzel (1994) observed, the apparent decline of interest in comparative adult education can also be linked to researchers and scholars having become too sensitised to the complexities and challenges generated by the changing nature of adult education and approaches to research. With increasing globalisation the field of adult education as an academic study became increasingly difficult to define. Edwards’ (1997) view on the precarious state of adult education comes to mind. It had, he argued, moved from the certainties of ‘bounded fields’ to the wilderness of ‘open morelands’.

Comparative adult education scholars, however, were not alone in being vexed about these shifts in academic thinking. The well-documented quantitative, qualitative divide in research methodologies is one such example. In comparative education and general social science research there emerged an abundance of literature on this very topic (see Charters, 1989; Schriewer and Holmes, 1992; Reason and Rowan, 1997, Burgess et.al, 2006, among numerous others). Debates about whether comparative education is, indeed, an art or science, whether it is a discipline in its own right, or an area of study in which several disciplines are brought to bear, whether it is a theoretical or an applied activity, and whether its techniques of analysis should be empirical-statistical, historical or philosophical, seem somewhat introspective now; but they have dominated the concerns of numerous comparativists from the field's early days and they continue to resurface in contemporary debates (Kazamias and Schwartz, 1997). Conversely, there were those who did not consider cross-national studies to be different from any other kind of research, while others were only too well aware of the many interdependencies, stumbling blocks and other variables. It was also argued that the very nature of sociological research is comparative and inherent to sociology, in as much as no social phenomenon can be studied in isolation (Øyen (1990).

Such complexities, theoretical debates, revitalising arguments and issues, did little to influence work in the comparative adult education field. Despite various attempts – there were, and continue to be, a number of conferences, studies and publications concerned with comparative adult education – it remained, and still does today, on the margins of the wider comparative enterprise. Here Peter's determination to bridge the gulf between both of these areas deserves to be acknowledged.

The blurring of boundaries

Today, the concept of 'comparative education' has lost its narrow methodological definition with writers such as Cowen arguing that comparative education begins when some complex, coherent and theoretical understanding of the relationship between at least two societies and their educational systems has been formed (Cowen, 1996). The journal *Comparative Education*, for example, states in its aims that the editors are particularly interested in in-depth studies investigating the interplay of international and domestic forces in the shaping of educational ideologies, educational systems, and patterns of teaching and learning. Equally, the Editorial Board of *Compare*, in its advice to potential authors, seeks contributions which

cover the lifespan from early childhood to the end of adult life. All contributions, it is suggested, should include a comparative and/or international dimension. 'Comparative' is defined in its widest sense and submitted articles do not necessarily need to compare different countries or contexts, but may compare across time, cultures or between different groups or systems. Equally, it has long been accepted that comparative studies can involve a variety of paradigms

and research approaches. Research of educational issues in a particular society can qualify as comparative as long as the analytical scheme examines phenomena within their socio-economic contexts, and the implications of findings can be related other societies and periods in time (Husen and Postlethwaite, 1994). Such validation applies to all levels of comparative education – be they located in initial, higher or post compulsory sectors. Terms such as comparative, international, inter-, intra-, an cross-cultural or in combination with those relating to the broad field of education perhaps best reflect the comparative puzzle. Phillips and Schweisfurth (2007) thus argue that 'comparative education' is often viewed as relating to the Western industrialised world and 'international' to the developing world – despite this being a view they do not share. Crossley and Watson (2003) also reflect upon such debates by stating that these twin fields - which have different roots - have a great deal in common. In their view, as a combined and multidisciplinary field of enquiry, comparative and international education has a rich collective history, a diversity of purposes and foundations, a global institutional network and a distinguished and well-established literature.

But what are Peter's contributions to the field of comparative education? Because his writings are very diverse and across a wide range of the educational spectrum, it is not easy to capture what these might be, and have been over the years. Perhaps one can say that he was often was ahead of the time. He wrote and talked about adult education, lifelong learning, globalisation and the learning society long before these became established topics in the wider domain of mainstream comparative education and the wider educational community. Nowadays, comparative journals generally accept adult-related studies. And here Peter's influence is truly remarkable which deserves recognition.

In his interest to pursue comparative adult education, Peter, in a number of his earlier publications (1991, 1994a, 1994b, 1996) grappled with developing a theoretical framework

suitable for the field which would support, enhance and develop a then emerging field of study. Such key interests, stemmed from his knowledge of, and interest in, sociology. Seen from this perspective, the provision of professional development and training for adult educators was the focus of one of his early books with an international/comparative dimension (Jarvis, Chadwick 1991). Peter, later on, focused on structures and systems, beginning with the clarification of concepts by country, the role of language and historical approaches, and leading to the analysis of providers and policies. Any comparative analysis of education, he argued, could include an analysis of its structure, clientele and learners; the nature of qualifications; the characteristics of providers; the mode of provision and the methods of presentation. In doing so, it could provide a taxonomy which would allow adult education systems to be compared on the basis of rigorous analysis (1994a; 1994b, 1996).

A number of country-by-country studies also served international comparative purposes (Titmus, 1981; Jarvis, 1991, 1994a; Arthur, 1994a, b). In the pre-global information network days of the early 1990s, such reports had their place in the comparative enterprise; they informed on the history, policies, structures and provision of adult education in the respective country or countries. Authors were given pre-determined editorial guidelines which ensured standardization and hence possible comparison of texts (Jarvis, 1994a). The editor (s) remained in control. “Literacy brokers”, a term coined by Lillis and Curry (2006) seems apt here. The term refers to the non-professional editors, reviewers, academic peers and colleagues who manipulate the production of texts, often from scholars whose first language may, or may not be, English and who may be in an ongoing personal/professional relationship with the editor(s). Peter’s exemplary networking skills meant that he was able to involve great numbers of distinguished scholars, and former students, from around the world in his publications with an international dimension. In this role he was acutely aware of the dangers of linguistic imperialism, recognising that much academic scholarship in languages other than English, tends to be lost, even if in translation (1994b). Those working collaboratively with researchers from other cultural/linguistic communities, or writing not in their own language, are only too aware of the range of cross-cultural complexities which create obstacles in such ventures (Arthur, 2006). Thus, Peter maintained, that if comparative adult education seeks to offer distinctiveness, it should also concern itself with the role of language and culture. (Jarvis, 1994 a, b).

With the impact of rapidly increasing globalisation, Peter's thinking began to move away from the traditional nation state focus. He became concerned with how powerful marketisation agendas were putting new pressures on the providers of adult education and training (Jarvis, 1996). Lifelong learning, the global market economy and the learning society thus came to command his thinking. These were topics he frequently addressed, not just in the adult learning community but also with those involved in mainstream comparative education and, notably, in his book *Globalisation, Lifelong Learning and The Learning Society* (2007) for which he won the Cyril Houle Award for Adult Education Literature in 2008. The wider forces that generate developments in adult education have to be understood, he argued. They are the inevitable consequence of post or late modernity. The world has become a global village; different and similar cultural and social practices have become much more apparent; all calling for comparative analysis and explanation. Such developments were seen to be leading to a re-conceptualization of knowledge inspired by postmodern theories; knowledge was now marketable and its mode of transmission had altered. Western cultural positions, from which old questions were being asked, forced scholars to question those taken for granted values (Jarvis, 1996).

The start of the New Millennium gave rise to reflection about the past, present and future of comparative education. In the Special Millennium Issue of *Comparative Education* mentioned earlier, Crossley and Jarvis (2000) point to the implications of rapid socio-political changes, the dramatic acceleration of globalisation and related theoretical and epistemological challenges in the development of theory, policy and practice in education. Furthermore, they observed the notable growth of the comparative field in non-Western countries. Increasingly, it was argued, Western values and positions need challenging. After many years of studying and lecturing in different countries, Peter wrote: "I realised that there are fundamentally different ways of looking at the world, and learning from it, which are culturally-based rather than hard-wired into each human being" (Jarvis 2013 pg.5). With reference to diverging, culturally moulded Western and Eastern philosophies about the nature of being human and learning, he suggests, that "learning is not just a function of teaching and a function of the person, it also and most fundamentally of Being itself, so that we not only learn to know and to do, but we learn to be" (2013, p. 6)

Wide horizons: implications for comparative education

So what can comparative education offer today for those with a particular interest in adult learning and, with reference to Peter's interests, what can lifelong learning add to the future of comparative education? In 1998, Holford et.al observed that by falling between a number of distinct research traditions, lifelong learning has been ill-served by scholarship. In much mainstream educational research the emphasis was on the school years and, to some extent, higher education, but little financial or scholarly attention was given to the 'poor relation' of adult education. Alongside this, the global concept of lifelong learning has penetrated all areas of the postgraduate curriculum in education – to the demise of the field as a distinctive area of scholarly activity. The Open University, for example, one of the pioneering institutions on behalf of adult education, no longer offers postgraduate courses which specifically support a lifelong learning curriculum; the same applies to most higher education departments in the UK. Arguably, this is an inevitable consequence of the speed with which lifelong learning discourses have travelled across cultural boundaries ever since Faure (1972) and Delors (1996) left their mark on global educational policy agendas. The tension between learning for its own sake, the humanistic model, and learning for and in the labour market, the economic model, persists to this day. Furthermore, as Schuetze (2006) points out, global lifelong learning policy reports are long on vision but short on practical relevance, primarily because translation into action is left to national governments, educational institutions and social partners. "It is crucial therefore to look at content and not just labels" (Schuetze, 2006, p. 287). Without content and specificities, the field of lifelong learning is in danger of becoming a meaningless concept, one which is easily hijacked by international institutions which are not necessarily concerned with its ethos. As McNess et.al (2016) point out, in our globalised, instant communication world, where seemingly everybody knows everything about everybody, there are increasingly few fixed dualisms. Instead, there are 'in-betweens', grey areas, or 'third spaces' (Bhabha, 1994). Yet they also have the potential to encourage new meaning to boundaries where historical, social, cultural, political and individual understandings meet.

These are all themes which have occupied Peter's thinking in recent years (Jarvis, 1996, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2007, 2014). From the sociological perspective, he would argue that while the term globalisation may have a variety of meanings, its processes are primarily linked to political and socio-economic power structures, economic competition and a world dominated by capitalism. Since the demise of the communist Eastern Block there are no clearly recognised alternatives to the way societies function (Jarvis, 2007). The rapidity of change

ushered in by globalisation, Peter argued, also means that people and societies have to constantly adjust to new circumstances, hence the need for lifelong learning in the learning society. “Societies cannot inform, know or learn- only people can do that. Societal culture can encourage, but it cannot force or control “(Jarvis, 2007, 97). In saying this, Peter, as ever, is stressing the human aspect in the learning process. All forms of adult learning are therefore at its core. Along with this, Peter argued that the learning society can be defined by power, and the degree of power learners have to access to learning, or not. Power therefore is embedded in the concept of the learning organisation. In Peter’s view, this perspective now dominates the social elements of learning. They are also challenges for comparative education, he maintains (Jarvis, 2000), because globalisation does not affect contexts uniformly and different cultures and labour markets make different demands on education and training

Other elements within the learning society discourse point to future directions for comparative education. However, it can be argued that all areas of investigation, be they national or local, are shaped by increasingly global forces, and one cannot be viewed without the other (Crossley and Jarvis, 2000). Despite such sentiments, Peter’ body of work recognises further tasks for the comparativist in seeking to answer the question ‘why compare’ (Jarvis, 2000). In doing this, he refers back to the humanistic thinking of the early pioneers of comparative adult education such as Liveright and Haygood (1968). Here he draws upon their emphasis on understanding the importance of learning from one another, to consider barriers to cross-cultural understanding, and to understand how different educational institutions can share responsibility for lifelong learning. Importantly, he argues that this “might facilitate the development of more critically aware people who can play their part as active citizens in formulating policy and creating the more democratic world envisaged by many who look forward to the creation of a global learning society” (Jarvis, 2000, p. 354).

Peter’s concern to generate critical awareness throughout society is important for all studies in the broad domain of education. Crossley and Watson (2009), for example, recognise the connection between this and the increases in the profile and impact of the many forms of qualitative research that have emerged from the 1970s. Such research can do much to challenge the predominant neo-liberal agenda and the often mutually supportive assumptions characteristic of the positivist research paradigm. Equally, innovative forms of contextually sensitive research can help to open the way for stronger critiques of education policy

priorities that are overly dominated by economic legitimacy. Peter had much to contribute to this trajectory of work.

In a similar vein, Crossley (2000) calls for multiple forms of intellectual and professional ‘bridge-building’ and for moving beyond the various cultures and traditions that have previously generated parameters and boundaries for comparative and international research. Moreover, building upon the discourses, literatures and experiences that have emerged in a world of intensified globalisation, he argues that this requires fundamental reconceptualisation and revitalisation in the comparative field itself. In pursuing this, he joined with Peter in reiterating the argument that in times of intensified globalisation, ‘context matters’, more than many realise, at all levels and in all forms, if the chances of successful educational reform are to be improved (Crossley and Jarvis, 2001). From this perspective, they concluded that it is particularly important to pay attention between the global and the local agendas, while acknowledging that such developments would demand ever more specialist knowledge, insight and understanding. This was at the heart of comparative research in education because “global forces heighten the significance of the contextual sensitivities that comparative researchers have a particular responsibility to identify, discipline and advance in the future” (Crossley and Jarvis 2000, p. 407).

Concluding reflections

Here we have argued that mainstream comparative education has increasingly accommodated and incorporated lifelong learning/adult education studies. So, is there is future for comparative adult education or has its chapter finally closed as a distinct entity in its own right? These questions were recently raised by Field et.al (2016). On the other hand, if comparative adult education still retains its own distinctive space and character what are its current priorities, issues of concern - and what is shaping the way forward? To what extent, for example, are global policy bodies such as the OECD or the World Bank, with their current emphasis on skills and competences, high-jacking the comparative agenda? Indeed, such questions are also pertinent for mainstream comparative education. As Crossley (2014) argues, recent times have seen renewed interest and prestige given to positivistic thinking and statistically oriented research. Large international surveys such as the OECD’s PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), for example, have attracted global interest from policy makers concerned with international efforts to improve the quality in education worldwide. Related international league tables also command widespread public

fascination and increasingly claim to speak the language of power. It is within this broader intellectual and professional context that research in comparative education, and comparative adult education must now be carried out. More specific global challenges are also generating priorities for the attention of comparative and adult education researchers - challenges that may best be faced by cross-disciplinary initiatives and genuine collaboration.

There may be other, perhaps more pressing tasks for comparative (adult) education which require cross-cultural sensitivities, knowledge and understanding. We live in volatile times, when established orders are being dismantled, when millions of refugees have sought, and are still seeking, shelter in Continental Europe on a scale not witnessed since the end of the Second World War, and when close to sixty million people worldwide are forcibly displaced as a result of conflict and human rights violations (UNHRC, 2015). It is also a time when, once again, increasing ethnocentrism is on the rise and when borders are being re-erected rather than pulled down. The accommodation of large numbers of strangers or migrants remains complex and a sensitive political issue affecting the survival and human rights for those on the margins – the outsiders – as well as those in the host community (Arthur et.al, 2016). All of these tensions call for humanistic insight and wisdom combined with a strengthening of intercultural awareness. In such turbulent times, disciplined research in both lifelong learning and comparative education has significant contributions to make to the quality of education and to wider issues of equity, inclusivity and social justice. Indeed, we maintain that this, inspired by many of Peter Jarvis's own arguments and contributions, is now more important than ever before.

In this paper we have sought to look at Peter Jarvis's many contributions to the fields of comparative adult education and comparative education. In the course of his professional life, Peter has witnessed seismic changes, not only in his research domains but in societies in general, in light of rapidly intensified globalisation and world-wide competition. Peter's writings have constantly adapted to these changes. As a genuine learner, he has been flexible in his thinking. Above all, it is the humanity in the learning enterprise that Peter stresses again and again in his publications. He has argued that we need a learning society - one in which the critical agendas are wider than we have at present, and in which learning really is designed to foster inclusion, social justice and personal fulfilment (Jarvis, 2007). It is through this form of learning that people grow and develop. Here the questions raised by comparative approaches to research and scholarship as well as in all sectors of education, have much to

offer future generations. These sentiments do much to capture Peter's determination to be constantly curious without pre-determining answers, and this, we suggest, is an important legacy for us all.

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